



Oregon Technical Advisory Committee



Meeting Notes for Feb. 14, 2019 - 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife / 4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE / Salem, OR 97302

Attendees

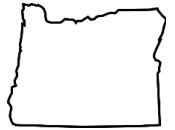
1. Danny Norlander, Oregon Department of Forestry
2. Eric Hartstein, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
3. Mike Brown, Bureau of Land Management
4. Brad Siemens, Department of Forestry
5. Sarah Navarro, Oregon Department of Forestry
6. Loren Unruh, Natural Resources Conservation Service
7. CalLee Davenport, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
8. Jeff Brown, Natural Resources Conservation Service
9. Jason Jeans, Natural Resources Conservation Service
10. Ron Alvarado, Natural Resources Conservation Service
11. Scott Oviatt, Natural Resources Conservation Service
12. Wes Jennings, Farm Service Agency
13. Taylor Murray, Farm Service Agency
14. Kevin Blakely, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
15. Anna Freitas, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts
16. Jerome Rosa, Oregon Cattleman's Association
17. Tracy Robillard, Natural Resources Conservation Service
18. Julie MacSwain, Natural Resources Conservation Service
19. Brenda Sanchez, Oregon Department of Agriculture

FSA Update: Provided by Taylor Murray and Wes Jennings, Farm Service Agency

- Barry Bushue is Oregon FSA's new Executive Director. He was appointed in October.
- A Farm Bill listening session will be hosted by the national USDA office on Feb. 22.
- Acreage caps are changing for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- At this time, FSA is not making modifications to existing CREP agreements or new CREP agreements. FSA is in a holding pattern on CREP until new Farm Bill implementation rolls out.
- Cultural reviews continue to be a challenge on CREP.
- There have been suggested changes to CRP primary nesting seasons in Oregon to reflect seasons in the neighboring states of Washington and California. Adding an additional month would allow for additional grazing that could aid with invasive annual grass control and could add more flexibility for producers. There could also be benefits to wildlife. Currently the season in Oregon is from March 1 to July 15; while Washington and California are from April 1 to July 1. The proposed changes are to switch Oregon's season to April 1 to July 1. (see handout provided with map)
- There is a white paper which lays out the justifications for shortening the season while looking at a range of considerations. Changing the nesting season dates and duration would require an Environmental Assessment. It's unclear on the timelines of that process through FSA national headquarters.
- Changes will come to emergency conservation programs with FSA, those changes will be announced in coming months.
- Conservation Reserve Program – Next year FSA anticipates 85,000 acres coming out of CRP. FSA can make revisions to existing CRP contracts to issue payments.
- Group discussion took place about flexibilities in fencing projects for landowners participating in CRP regarding standards and specs of various agencies, for example NRCS and the Fish and Wildlife Service.



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NRCS Update: Provided by Ron Alvarado and Loren Unruh, NRCS

- NRCS Oregon is excited about the new Farm Bill and will be rolling out information on it as the agency develops policy. Oregon will continue the Strategic Approach to Conservation and the partnership-driven, locally-led efforts. OTAC is a forum where we can identify issues and come together to work through items.
- No new NRCS programs were added, and none were eliminated, so we will continue to offer the types of assistance producers have come to expect, and even improve upon them.
- The Conservation Title increases funding for EQIP, ACEP, and direct funding for RCPP.
- Robust support for CSP remains, despite a reduction of funding levels over a budgetary baseline, essentially replacing an acreage cap in favor of yearly funding authorizations.
- ACEP Agricultural Land Easements will provide entities who will hold easements more flexibility and control over land stewardship requirements and other management actions.
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program contains improvements to make it more efficient and effective. Impediments are removed, enabling NRCS and partners to better manage funding throughout the duration of projects.
- Grasslands receive some focus through the new Grassland Conservation Initiative within CSP and the continued incentives to protect grasslands of special environmental significance within ACEP.
- Wildlife resource concerns are supported through the Working Lands for Wildlife effort, through ACEP-WRE, and through increased funding levels through EQIP.
- Organic and transitioning to organic producers no longer have an annual payment limitation under EQIP and can receive \$140,000 over the course of the Farm Bill compared to \$80,000 on a rolling 6-year period under the 2014 Farm Bill. Additionally, CSP provides a special allocation to States based upon the extent of organic production occurring within the State.
- Urban growers' concerns will receive increased consideration under the Conservation Innovations Grants and the availability of additional funding for soil tests and related activities.
- Soil health and water quality and quantity are priorities of the agricultural community, and the Conservation title of the Farm Bill underscore congressional support for these areas of focus.
- **Soil Health:** EQIP expands opportunities for Conservation Activity Plans to include soil health planning, planning for resource conserving crop rotations, and precision conservation management planning. Soil testing was also added as an eligible practice under EQIP. CSP expands conservation activities to include soil health planning, and highlights building soil organic matter through the adoption of resource conserving crop rotations.
- **Water quantity:** EQIP modifications improve water conservation and irrigation efficiency by allowing payments for scheduling, distribution efficiency, and soil moisture monitoring; irrigation related structural or other measures that conserve surface or ground water; and making assistance available for producers who want to transition to water conserving crops and crop rotations.
- **Water quality:** NRCS will continue to address water quality concerns through EQIP, CSP and RCPP. This Conservation Title also requires collaboration with community water systems and state technical committees. A minimum level of 10 percent of conservation program funding, other than CRP, is to be used for source water protection.
- **New and Anticipated Concerns:** EQIP assistance will be available for new and anticipated resource concerns. It specifically recognizes that producers are facing resource concerns created by extreme weather events and enables NRCS to help assist producers adapt to and mitigate against increasing weather volatility. The Conservation Title also expands NRCS's ability to assist APHIS with resource concerns creating by the growing feral swine population in several regions of the country.



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Sudden Oak Death Update: Provided by Sarah Navarro, Statewide Pathologist, Oregon Department of Forestry

- Oregon's Sudden Oak Death (SOD) program is a collaborative effort with multiple state, federal, and local agencies and organizations.
- The Sudden Oak Death Task Force was formed by the Oregon Association of Counties.
- SOD discovered in 2001 in Brookings, Oregon.
- There is a partial county quarantine in a portion of Curry County. California has multiple quarantine zones.
- No cost to private landowners for treatments within the state quarantine area. However, the work is relatively expensive at up to \$5,000/acre. Treatment involves removing the host species.
- Diseased tanoaks also present a hazard for wildfire.
- Treatment is required on private property in the quarantine area.
- Detection of European lineage in Oregon (Japanese Larch is host tree) – EU1 strain detected in 2015.
- NRCS EQIP assistance was targeted to the EU1 area.
- Potential implications to use removed tanoak for biochar production – the trials are just starting up.
- New economic impact analysis coming Feb. 15 for Oregon Sudden Oak Death (final draft) will be distributed to SOD members.
- Oregon NRCS is committed to providing funding for SOD over at least a 3-year period, this year (FY19) was the first year of funding provided through EQIP.

OTAC subcommittees

OTAC sub-committees are used for consulting on specific programs. NRCS is actively seeking participants to join the following OTAC sub-committees:

- **Easements**
- **CIG**
- **Farm Bill Programs**
- **Working Lands for Wildlife**

Drought Status and Water Supply Update, Presented by Scott Oviatt, NRCS

- Westside snowpack has been below normal so far this season. East side has been normal or above normal. A lot of improvement has been recorded in just one week, from Feb. 8 to Feb. 14 due to colder storms across the state.
- Today's statewide precipitation is 87% of normal.
- Concerns with low streamflow in Prineville area and Owyhee area
- Some improvement in drought monitor but all of Oregon remains in a drought; the D3 zone (extreme drought) covers most of the central part of the state.
- Landowners and producers are encouraged to submit drought-related observations on their property. See handout with detailed information on this new web portal.

Conservation Innovation Grants, Presented by Loren Unruh



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- NRCS staff presented a new booklet that highlights CIG funds in Oregon over the last Farm Bill, 2014 – 2018.
- Oregon is committed to continuing to offer CIG funding, which is typically \$250,000 a year that comes from our state's EQIP dollars.
- Anticipate the next CIG call for proposals to come out this spring.

Round Robin

- Monarch butterfly numbers are a record low, CalLee Davenport is the lead contact at FWS for Monarch. There is a need for additional partnership efforts for monarch conservation in Oregon.
- Connect conference is April 9 – 11 in Sunriver, Oregon. Registration is open.
- NRCS EQIP cut-off date was originally set for March 15 but is now "to be determined" as we get more guidance from headquarters. The new application deadline will be announced soon.
- BLM putting more emphasis on funding agreements with non-federal entities such as Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Watershed Councils. Drinking Water Partnership – applications for 2019 were due Feb. 13 and are currently being evaluated for up to a half million dollars in funding.
- ODA is ramping up strategic focus areas for ag water quality, looking to do 12 areas a year (up from 6 a year).
- OWEB – Board approved programmatic rules for Oregon Ag Heritage Programs, the board approved 5 new focused invested partnerships (FIPS) which are landscape-level conservation partnerships. John Day Partnership; Baker Local Implementation Team; Warner Basin Partners; Rogue Forest Partnership; Clackamas Partnership.
- Agreement being worked out through American Forest Foundation with ODF and NRCS to help write forest management plans for private landowners, which will help augment their stewardship program.
- NRCS Oregon has hired a state forester, who previously served as a forester in Arizona with the state.
- The next OTAC meeting is tentatively set for May 30, 2019. Location is FSA State Office in Tualatin.

- END -

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